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## S. T. COLERIDGE AS A LAKE POET.

BY ERNEST HARTLEY COLERIDGE, M.A., HON. F.R.S.L.

I ONCE had the good fortune to meet at the Authors' Club the late William Morris, poet, printer, artist, art furnisher, and socialist. It was towards the close of his life, and the keen, vigorous spirit was affected by the near approach of mortal sickness,—affected, but not changed or weakened. When I came up to the table where he was already seated—his face buried in his hands—he looked up and greeted me in this wise: “Your grandfather wrote a few perfect poems, but as for that old lake-poet Wordsworth, he [I will not attempt to give the exact words]—he never wrote any poetry at all.” I hardly think he could have meant what he said about Wordsworth; if so (to adapt a phrase of Robert Browning's) the less William Morris he. But he certainly did hold, as his Kelmscott edition (now worth far more than its weight in silver) proves, that only a few of Coleridge's poems, a few gems, are worth preserving, and that the rest may be allowed to perish. This is, I think, a superstition of the moment—an *eidolon columnarum*, a ghost of the book-market, formidable but unsubstantial. True it is that between Coleridge in his early youth, not

yet inspired, and Coleridge at his best, or, again, between Coleridge as a lyrical and Coleridge as a dramatic poet, there is a great gulf fixed; but the truth, the unrhetorical truth, is that over and above the half-dozen gems of the first water there are more than fifty others which have not perished in the dust. Take the selections, the handiwork of critics and poets. Mr. Swinburne's tale of 'Lyrical and Imaginative Poems' numbers 48; Mr. Andrew Lang's 'Selections from Coleridge' numbers 33; Mr. Stopford Brooke's 'Golden Book of Coleridge' contains 84; and Dr. Garnett's 'Poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge' over 100 pieces. After—I am quoting from a letter to his brother George,—after he had "snapped his squeaking baby-trumpet of sedition"—or, as Byron put it, "let to the 'Morning Post' its aristocracy,"—Coleridge used to maintain that heads—that is, voters—must be weighed, not counted. Here and now I will say nothing about voters, but it is undoubtedly true that poems must be weighed, not counted; and it is but to answer the critics according to their criticism that I have laboured this question of numbers—of quantity rather than quality—before asserting that it is only in seven or eight poems that Coleridge betrays the fact that he was a dweller among the mountains, that, as Lamb has it, "he lived in Skiddaw." And yet he was familiar with almost the whole of the Lake District—second only to Wordsworth in a general knowledge of its main features. For the few years—four or five at most if his long absences are omitted—which he divided between Keswick and Grasmere, he read,



learnt, marked, and took into his inmost soul every effect of sunshine or of shade, every modification of outline of ridge or peak, every accentuation, every undulation of foreground—the moss, the stones, the puddles at his feet, the glimmer and gloom of silver and ebon on the surface of the lakes, the pageantry of mist and cloud, the light, the colour, the magic, the enchantment of the hills. He was fulfilled with the vision, and the record remains—an unique, a marvellous record,—transfigured, indeed, by genius, but, with rare and brief exceptions, untranslated into song.

But before I touch upon the Keswick poems I must dwell upon one or two incidents of Coleridge's earlier years before he settled at Greta Hall, before the triumvirate Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge were grouped together and nicknamed Lakists. I can throw no pictures on the screen, I have no magic lantern—only the dim and intermittent lantern of speech,—but, thanks to the record, I can for a few brief moments bring you within speaking distance of one who wrote as he spoke—that is, when press and publisher were out of his ken,—and for the sake of the text you must bear with and forgive the commentary.

It must be borne in mind that a love of mountain scenery, the admiration for precipitous crags and wide stretches of barren hillside, was a new fashion, hardly as yet a reality in Coleridge's youth. White, of Selborne, describes the Sussex Downs as “a chain of majestic mountains,” and adds, “For my own part I think there is something peculiarly sweet and amusing in the shapely figured aspect of

chalk hills in preference to those of stone, which are rugged, broken, abrupt, and shapeless." Even that was a novel and daring sentiment. It was the champaign—the smiling plain, rich, cultivated lands, park, and forest—which appealed to the lover of the picturesque in the eighteenth century. The first mountaineer who climbed a dark brow for the sake of climbing was, I believe, the poet Petrarch, who ascended the *Mons Ventosus* in the south of France; and he, if I remember aright, made a considerable splutter over the job, and was not impressed by what he saw. Mountains were by no means flattered in the brave days of old; they were miscalled cruel, savage, horrible, the perilous abodes of mystery and terror.

Even in 1807, long after "The Brothers" and "Michael" had appeared in the second edition of the 'Lyrical Ballads,' a learned and fashionable poetaster, the Rev. Thomas Maurice, appealed successfully to the public taste by his poem on "Richmond Hill;" and it was not till Scott poured forth his romantic poems and poetical romances, and Byron, dosed, as he said, by Shelley, imitated and interpreted Wordsworth in his magnificent Third Canto of "Childe Harold," that the average Briton yielded to the enchantment of burn and peak, of moor and crag and fell.

Coleridge's first experience of mountain scenery was in the summer of 1794, when, in company with a college friend, one Joseph Hucks, he made a tour on foot through the greater part of North Wales. His heart and head were full to overflowing with thoughts and feelings of a vivid and personal nature; of republican and socialistic notions, equality and fraternity; of his lost love, Mary Evans, whom he

caught sight of, he says, accidentally at Wrexham; and his letters contain one tribute, and only one, to the scenery through which he was passing. He was on his way from Llangunnog to Bala, and he describes the last twelve miles as "sublimely beautiful." "It was scorchingly hot. I applied my mouth, ever and anon, to the side of the rock, and sucked in draughts of water cold as ice, and clear as infant diamonds in their embryo dew. The rugged and stony clefts are stupendous, and in winter form cataracts most astonishing; now there is just enough sun-glittering water dashed over them to 'soothe, not to disturb the ear.' I slept by the side of one an hour or more." Two years later, in August, 1796, he was in Derbyshire, and visited the "thrice lovely vale of Ilam, a vale hung with woods all round, except just at its entrance. It is without exception the most beautiful place I ever saw." Derbyshire had supplanted Wales. A year goes by, and he becomes the neighbour and intimate friend of Wordsworth. The following passage in "Osorio," the original draft of "Remorse," must, I surmise, be traced to a description of Thirlmere and Lancy Beck which had been given him by Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. At any rate it fits that exquisite scene as it was before the ancient watermarks were obliterated by the Manchester Reservoir.

"You can't mistake. It is a small green dale  
Built all around with high, off-sloping hills,  
And from its shape our peasants aptly call it  
The Giant's Cradle. There's a lake in the midst,  
And round its banks tall wood that branches over,  
And makes a kind of fairy forest grow

Down in the water. At the further end  
 A puny cataract falls on the lake,  
 And there (a curious sight) you see its shadow  
 For ever curling, like a wreath of smoke,  
 Up through the foliage of those fairy trees."

I quote these lines because they were written by Coleridge two years before he set foot in Westmoreland, and they show that by this time (1797) heart and eye were prepared for the revelation which he was to receive himself, and, in turn, to make manifest to others. Hitherto it might have been said of mankind generally, with regard to the finer perception of Nature in her wilder aspects, that "having eyes they saw not."

Lastly, we come to that extraordinary prediction which Coleridge uttered over the cradle of his first-born, Hartley, a prediction which was fulfilled both in the spirit and to the letter. The lines occur in "Frost at Midnight," which was written in February, 1798, whilst he was living and likely to live in Somersetshire, two years and a half before he took up his quarters at Keswick.

"I was reared

In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,  
 And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.  
 But *thou*, my babe, shalt wander like a breeze  
 By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags  
 Of ancient mountains and beneath the clouds  
 Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores  
 And mountain crags. So shalt thou see and hear  
 The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible  
 Of that eternal language which thy God  
 Utters, who from eternity doth teach  
 Himself in all, and all things in Himself."

Yet one more experience of mountaineering was to befall Coleridge before he bent his steps northward. In May, 1799, at the close of a nine months' residence in Germany, he joined a party of his fellow-students at the University of Göttingen on a three days' tour in the Hartz mountains. He gives a detailed account of the peculiar features of the scenery, of which the following remarkable sentence may be taken as a sample:—"The valley or basin into which we look down is called the Wald Rauschenbach—that is, the Valley of the Roaring Brook; and roar it did most solemnly. . . . Now again is nothing but fir and pine above, below, around us! How awful is the deep unison of their undividable murmur; what a one thing it is—it is a sound that impresses the deep notion of the Omnipresent. In various parts of the deep vale below us we beheld little dancing waterfalls gleaming through the branches, and now, on our left hand, from the very summit of the hill above us, a powerful stream flung itself down leaping and foaming, and now concealed, and now *not* concealed, and now half-concealed by the fir-trees, till towards the road it became a visible sheet of water within whose immediate neighbourhood no pine could have permanent abiding place. The snow lay everywhere on the sides of the roads, and glimmered in company with the waterfall foam, snow patches and water breaks glimmering through the branches on the hill above, the deep basin below, and the hill opposite." That is a forecast of the elaborate descriptions of lakes and mountains, roads and walls and cottages with which he filled his note-books after he came to Keswick and began to take long, solitary

walks. He had become by this time a minute observer and careful recorder of scenic effects. Four months after his return from Germany, in November, 1799, Coleridge, companioned and guided by Wordsworth, walked through the whole of the Lake District, beginning with Haweswater and ending at Eusemere, at the foot of Ulleswater, then the residence of the emancipationist, Thomas Clarkson. There is an especial interest in his first comments on Keswick, which he passed *en route* for Lorton, where he saw "a yew prodigious in size and complexity of numberless branches. It flings itself on one side entirely over the river, its branches all verging waterwards over the field—on its branches names numberless carved; some of the names, being grown up, appear in *alto rilievo*"—perhaps the earliest mention of the "Pride of Lorton Vale, Which to this day stands single in the midst Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore." (So wrote Wordsworth in 1803; a guide-book of 1780 does not mention it.) He is writing from Ouse Bridge at the foot of Bassenthwaite. "From the window of the inn we overlook the whole of the lake, a simple majesty of water and mountain, and in the distance the bank (Skiddaw Dodd) rising like a wedge, and in the second distance the crags of Derwentwater. What an effect of the shades in the water! On the left the conical shadow, on the right a square of splendid black, all the intermediate area a mirror reflecting dark and sunny cloud,—but in the distance a black promontory with a circle of melted silver, and a path of silver running from it. The snowy Borrowdale is seen in the farthest distance."

Again, a few days later, on his return from



Wastdale, when he is quitting Keswick, he describes the view from the Druidical circle: "Before me, towards Keswick, the mountains stand one behind the other in orderly array, as if evoked by, and attentive to, the assembly of white-vested wizards." That is an image which would only have occurred to a poet. He assumes that the place was a sanctuary, the scene of magic rites and ceremonies, and as he observes the "assembly" of fantastic peaks, Grisedale Pike, and Causey Pike, and Red Pike, and so on, which fall into line one behind the other, he feigns to himself that these shapes and forms had been summoned out of nothingness and marshalled into "orderly array" by the white-surpliced Druids who ministered at the central altar within the circling shrine of stones.

On the same day that he turned to look at Keswick Hill he made his way, *viâ* Threlkeld and Matterdale, to Gowbarrow, where danced and dance the daffodils. The description of the scene which met his view on his descent from Ulleswater has been transcribed from his MS. diary, and will be new to all who are present. There were no photographs in 1799, and yet Coleridge spoke into his note-books, and they do in a very real fashion give out and give back his thoughts after many days. Faint pencil scrawls though they be, they reproduce the scene as it was in the eye of a beholder whose eye was full of light. "I have come," he says, "suddenly on Ulleswater; a little below Place Fell there is a stretch, a large slice of silver, and above this a bright ruffledness, the work of some atomic *sportiviculi*—motes in the sunbeams, or vortices of

flies. And how shall I describe the opposite bank and the waters below—a mass of fused silver? Yonder house, too, its slates rain-wet and silver in the sunshine, its shadows running down into the water like a column.

“But I have omitted the two island-rocks in the lake; the one seems to me like wine in the glassy shadow, but far removed from the dazzle, and quite conspicuous. The sun—it being past noon—hangs over the lake, clouded, so that any but a weak eye might gaze on it, the clouds being in part bright white, and part, with islets of blue sky, dusky and full of rain. Now the scene changes; what tongues of light shoot out of the banks! We visited Aira Force; the chasm is very fine. Violet-coloured beeches, and hawthorns as big as forest trees, and a prickly with berries as red as red flowers, grow close at hand. The higher part of the fall, where the two streams run athwart each other, is a thing to itself; but where the wheel-part is broken it spreads itself into a muslin apron, and the whole waterfall looks like a long-waisted giantess slipping down on her back. But on the bridge, where you see only the wheel, it is very fine; the waters circumsolve with a complete half-wheel. We gain the road that runs along by the lake, and through the branches of the pine trees which grow along the margin we glimpse the bare knotty cliff opposite, and its shadow which lies so soft on the bosom of the lake.”

Thus much the diary, but in a letter to Dorothy he sums up his impressions of the Lake Country generally.

“You can feel, what I cannot express for myself,



how deeply I have been impressed by a world of scenery absolutely new to me. At Rydal and Grasmere I received, I think, the deepest delight; yet Haweswater, through many a varying view, kept my eyes dim with tears; and, the evening approaching, Derwentwater, in diversity of harmonious features, in the majesty of its beauties, and the beauty of its majesty, . . . and the black crags close under the snowy mountains, whose snows were pinkish with the setting sun, and the reflections from the rich clouds which floated over some and rested upon others! It was to me a vision of a fair country. Why were you not with us?"

There is something delightful and mysterious in the beginning of things—the foundation of a city, a society, or an institution, the birth of a race or nation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and in all *beginnings* there is a sense of hope and promise, a freshness as of Paradise, to which, as time goes on, we look back with a kind of longing wonder, of loving interest. The first years of the nineteenth century brought forth, it may be, greater things than a new school of poetry, a heightened and a deepened sense of natural scenery; still, it is both instructive and delightful to look back to and realise the beginnings of thoughts and feelings which have leavened and lightened the heads and hearts of succeeding generations.

The walking tour with Wordsworth in 1799 was no doubt a factor in Coleridge's determination to follow Wordsworth's example and settle near him in the Lake Country. Accordingly, in June, 1800, he brought his wife and four-year-old Hartley to Words-

worth's cottage at Town End, Grasmere,—a cottage which had formerly been the Dove Inn, but was not known to Wordsworth or Coleridge as Dove Cottage; and a month later he took up his quarters at Greta Hall. To southern ears Greta Hall has a stately sound, but, as a matter of fact, the new home was a set of half-furnished lodgings in a house newly built by a carrier named William Jackson, the master of Benjamin, the hero of Wordsworth's "Waggoner." It was an ideal home for a poet, and at first, and for a time at least, the *genius loci* constrained and inspired his fitful and inconstant muse. The autumn of 1800 brought forth the second part of "Christabel." The first part had been written more than two years before at Nether Stowey, where Wordsworth and Coleridge wandered together over the green slopes and romantic coombes of the Quantocks. Unlike "The Ancient Mariner," it had remained unfinished, and for that reason had not been included in the first edition of the 'Lyrical Ballads,' published in September, 1798. A second edition was now being projected, and if only "Christabel" might be kept within due limits and finished in time there would be joy at Grasmere. As the fates would have it, "Christabel" grew and grew—but grew not to a close. It was running up to 1300 lines—bid fair, that is, to be on the scale of 1300 lines (for it never reached more than half that number)—and so remained in MS. till, in 1816, at Lord Byron's suggestion and through his influence, this "wild and original poem," as he was half quizzed for calling it, was published as a fragment—a tale half told. Half the fragment belongs to the South;

but the second part bears traces, though superficial traces only, of Coleridge's recent introduction to the scenery of the Lake District. The opening lines of Part II must have been suggested by a walk to Great Langdale which he took with Wordsworth in July, 1800. Wordsworth, no doubt, was guide. For his "Idle Shepherd Boys," or "Dungeon Ghyll Force," must have been conceived and written in the lambing season of 1800; while Coleridge entered Dungeon Ghyll in his note-book, and sketched the bridge of rock in the height of summer; and it was not till the following September that "Christabel" revisited the glimpses of the moon.

"Each matin bell, the Baron saith,  
Knells us back to a world of death.  
These words Sir Leoline first said,  
When he rose and found his lady dead :  
These words Sir Leoline will say  
Many a morn to his dying day.  
And hence the custom and law began,  
That still at dawn the sacristan,  
Who duly pulls the heavy bell,  
Five-and-forty heads must tell  
Between each stroke—a warning knell,  
Which not a soul can choose but hear  
From Bratha Head to Wyndermere.

"Saith Bracy the bard, So let it knell !  
And let the drowsy sacristan  
Still count as slowly as he can !  
There is no lack of such, I ween,  
As well fill up the space between.  
In Langdale Pike and Witch's Lair,  
And Dungeon Ghyll so foully rent  
With ropes of rock and bells of air,  
Three sinful sextons' ghosts are pent,

Who all give back one after t'other  
The death note to their living brother ;  
And oft, too, by the knell offended,  
Just as their one ! two ! three ! is ended,  
The devil mocks the doleful tale  
With a merry peal from Borrowdale."

Here is the key in the pencilled note : " Stand to the right hand close to the bellying rock, so as to see the top of the waterfall, the highest of whose parallelograms is faced with ferns ; daylight in the wet rock ; the arch right above ; the little imitation of the great waterfall (connections in nature) ; between the arch and the great waterfall an arch of trees—hollies, ash, and birch ; the stream widens from a foot to a yard and a half, as it widens varying from a vivid white to a black through all the intermediate shades. The second arch divided from the first by a huge natural bridge, one vast boulder contiguated to the two sides by rocks small and pendulous. Plummy ferns on the side and over the second pool ; on the left side the light umbrella of a young ash." It is a thousand to one that Coleridge knew best (and, as saints and theologians may dare to speak lightly and gaily of sacred things with a blameless audacity which would be reckoned profanity in the profane, so, too, the poet may sport with the muse) ; but I am half tempted to say of this jocular episode of the devil and the three sextons—"I would, I would it were not here." But, criticism apart, the comparison of the note-book with the poem is most interesting. For in a fifth edition of West's first guide-book to the Lakes, dated 1793, only seven years before Coleridge made his

note and sketch, there is no mention of Dungeon Ghyll. Think of it—an undiscovered, unexploited, untouristed Dungeon Ghyll! And there was the sacred bard to enrol it amongst famous watersprings—"Siloa's brook that flowed Fast by the oracles of God," and Bandusia's Fount, dear to Horace, and the Streams of Dove consecrated to an unknown goddess—the half-hidden violet Lucy.

Again, at the close of the second part, when Sir Leoline dispatches Bard Bracy on a mission to Lord Roland de Vaux, of Tryermaine :

"Ho! Bracy the bard, the charge be thine;  
Go thou, with music sweet and loud,  
And take two steeds with trappings proud,  
And take the youth whom thou lov'st best  
To bear thy harp and learn thy song,  
And clothe you both in solemn vest,  
And over the mountains haste along.  
And when he has crossed the Irthing Flood,  
My merry bard! he hastes, he hastes,  
Up Knorren Moor, thro' Halegarth Wood,  
And reaches soon that castle good  
Which stands and threatens Scotland's wastes."

These places are not in the Lake District, but away to the north in Gilsland. I am not certain whether Coleridge ever was so far north, or whether he picked the names out of some old map or county history—Nicholson and Burns', to wit, which he owned and annotated—found amongst his landlord's odd volumes. Halegarth Wood I have not been able to trace, but Knorren Moor and Irthing Flood are certainly in or near Gilsland. Tryermaine is a barony of Gilsland, and, strange to say, near the

reputed site of the castle is the Witch's Crag—a haunted spot which may have suggested to Coleridge the assumed relationship of the witch Geraldine to Lord Roland de Vaux, of Tryermaine. In the first part, when Christabel had stolen from the castle by midnight, and was kneeling beneath the old oak tree wrapped in prayer “for the weal of her lover that's far away,” the witch Geraldine, “richly clad and beautiful exceedingly,” approached her and began to weave her spells, thinking to enmesh in unholy mystery the soul of the spotless maiden. What was her motive? Had she caught sight of Christabel's lover, who “was far away,” and thought to win him for herself? Had Christabel's lover been allured by her unholy charms; and hence it was, with the *clairvoyance* of fear and love, that she had dreams “all yesternight of her own betrothed knight”? Perhaps such curious speculations are a rash and irreverent intrusion into poetic mysteries beyond our ken; but it is pleasant to think that Sir Leoline lived at Langdale, and that his old friend and foe, Lord Roland de Vaux, lived in Gilsland, the further side of the Irthing Flood; and to guess that Geraldine might still be found in the clefts of the Witch's Crag.

And now I fear I must inflict upon you a brief table of contents:

In September–October, 1802, Coleridge published in the ‘Morning Post’ eight of his greater poems. They appeared in the following order:—(1) “The Picture, or the Lover's Resolution;” (2) “The Hymn before Sunrise at Chamounix;” (3) “The Keepsake;” (4) “The Good Great Man;” (5) “The Inscription for a Fountain on the Heath;”



(6) "Ode to the Rain" (?); (7) "Dejection: an Ode;" (8) "Answer to a Child's Question;" (9) "A Day-dream." He had written in 1800 "The Stranger Minstrel" and "The Mad Monk;" and in 1801 he wrote and published in the 'Morning Post' his "Ode to Tranquillity" and "Lines on Revisiting the Sea Shore;" and, last of all, "The Pains of Sleep," which was written at Edinburgh in 1803, but not published till 1816. These, with the exception of the undated lines, "The Knight's Grave," "A Thought suggested by a View of Saddleback," "The Tombless Epitaph," and most probably that late-gleaned treasure, the ballad of "Alice du Clos," were all the poems which were written in the Lake District between the years 1800—1804. The exquisite trio or lyrical trilogy, "Recollection of Love," "The Happy Husband," and "A Day-dream," I associate, rightly or wrongly, with Stowey revisited; while the "Lines to a Gentleman," *i. e.* Wordsworth—that pathetic poem with an unpathetic or antipathetic title,—were written when he was staying with the Wordsworths in a farmhouse not a stone's throw from Sir George Beaumont's then unfinished mansion at Coleorton. Be not dismayed; I can only say a few words on one or two of this loose-strung chaplet of jewels which "wildly glitter here and there."

Contemporary with "Christabel," there or thereabouts, was "The Keepsake." It opens thus:

"The tedded hay, the firstfruits of the soil,  
The tedded hay and corn-sheaves in one field  
Show summer gone ere come. The foxglove tall

Sheds its loose purple bells, or on the gуст,  
Or when it bends beneath the up-springing lark  
Or mountain-finch alighting. And the rose  
Stands like some boasted beauty of past years,  
The thorns remaining and the flowers all gone."

The place is surely an upland valley or mountain-bottom. The belated hay-crop—"tedded" (a Miltonic word which Coleridge had already made his own), tedded, spread out in thin discoloured swaths—would strike a Southerner, to whom hay in October was strange enough; while the foxglove, which blooms late in the North, and the rose-bush with its scarlet haws, are familiar sights by "rivulet or spring or wet roadside." This is the late autumn of the North, "more beautiful" with lingering fruits and foliage, exuberant in comparison with the drouthy and discoloured aftergrowth of a Southern summer.

To the autumn of 1800 belong, too, "The Stranger Minstrel" and "The Mad Monk," poems written to and for the poetess Mary Robinson, that "boasted beauty of past years," the once-enchanting Perdita, now sick and dying. We know her face, for Reynolds and Gainsborough and Romney painted her (are not the "counterfeit presentments" in the Hertford Gallery?), and of her poor pitiful story we know more than enough. She had been telling Coleridge she would dearly love to look once more on Skiddaw, and he rejoins:

"Thou ancient Skiddaw, by thy helm of cloud,  
And by thy many-coloured chasms deep,  
And by their shadows that for ever sleep,  
By you small flaky mists that love to creep  
Along the edges of those spots of light,



Those sunny islands on thy smooth green height,—  
 O ancient Skiddaw, by this tear,  
 I would, I would that she were here.”

Here, perhaps, in the “shadows that for ever sleep,” is a comment on, if not an anticipation of, Wordsworth’s august image—“the sleep that is among the lonely hills;” and here, *per accidens*, is an unconscious prophecy of “those sunny islets of the blest and the intelligible,” which Carlyle allowed were now and again distinguishable and distinct amid the iridescent mists of Coleridge’s transcendental monologue.

“The Mad Monk” need not detain us save for one remarkable stanza which seems to have rested on Wordsworth’s poetic consciousness—and to have given the key-note of his great harmony,—The Ode to Immortality.

“There was a time when earth, and sea, and skies,  
 The bright green vale and forest’s dark recess,  
 With all things lay before mine eyes  
 In steady loveliness.  
 But now,” etc.\*

Here, surely, is the germ of—

“There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
 The earth, and every common sight,  
 To me did seem  
 Apparell’d in celestial light,  
 The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
 It is not now,” etc.

\* There is, too, so I am informed by my friend Mr. T. Hutchinson, a remarkable conformity of the metrical scheme of “The Mad Monk” to the metrical scheme of Wordsworth’s lines, “’Tis said that some have died for love,” which was written in 1800—a proof how carefully “Coleridge studied Wordsworth’s metrical methods, sometimes adopting, sometimes varying, and sometimes improving upon them.”

In "The Picture, or the Lover's Resolution," which belongs to the summer of 1802, the influence of mountain scenery on the entire consciousness of the writer is at its height. Here is a poetic rendering of one of his sketches or word-photographs :

"And hark ! the noise of a near waterfall,—  
I pass forth into light—I find myself  
Beneath a weeping birch (most beautiful  
Of forest trees, the Lady of the Wood),  
Hard by the brink of a tall weedy rock  
That overbrows the cataract. Here bursts  
The landscape on my sight ! Two crescent hills  
Fold in behind each other, and so make  
A circular vale, and land-locked, as might seem,  
With brook and bridge, and grey stone cottages,  
Half hid by rock and fruit-trees. At my feet  
The whortleberries are bedewed with spray  
Dashed upwards by the furious waterfall.  
How solemnly the pendent ivy-mass  
Swings in its winnow ! all the air is calm.  
The smoke from cottage chimneys, tinged with light,  
Rises in columns ; from this house above,  
Close by the waterfall, the column slants,  
And feels its ceaseless breeze."

The opening lines of this poem, "Through weeds and thorns and matted underwood I force my way," etc., may be cited in corroboration of Hazlitt's observation that the "numbers came" to Coleridge when his "path was rough," when he was "walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse ;" or they may be regarded as the germ of the reminiscence. Characteristic anecdotes are dear to the heart of the biographer and the essayist, but they should be taken with two pinches of quali-

fying salt, a pinch of "perhaps" and a pinch of "sometimes."

I must pass over two exquisite fragments, "The Knight's Grave," dear to Sir Walter Scott, and "Lines suggested by a View of Saddleback" ("On stern Blencartha's perilous height"), which were, I conceive, sparks from the anvil on which Part II of "Christabel" was forged; and proceed to two other poems of the first magnitude written at Keswick, "Dejection: an Ode" (April, 1802), and "The Hymn before Sunrise" (August, 1802). Of the first and greatest I will say little. The imagery is of the valley and the home. "The larch that pushes out in tassels green its bundled leafits" (I quote from an early draft), the "peculiar tint of yellow green" in the western sky, the wild storm, the "mad Lutanist who in this month of showers, Of dark brown gardens and of peeping flowers, Mak'st Devil's yule," fix and present the season, but are not characteristic of the place. We know, but could hardly guess, that the poem was written at Greta Hall. On the other hand, "The Hymn before Sunrise," which purported to have been composed at Chamouni, derived not, indeed, its form, or even the whole of its substance, but its passion and its power, from the enthusiasm or possession, the spiritual excitement aroused by a solitary walk on Scafell. It is, as De Quincey was the first to point out, an expansion—here and there a translation—of a striking and admirable poem by Friederike Brun. Coleridge sent it, together with a fictitious preface, to the 'Morning Post' in 1802, and afterwards included it by way of, or for want of, copy in 'The Friend' in 1809, and, finally, in 1817 published it

in 'Sibylline Leaves.' In the first two instances an acknowledgment of the German source was, perhaps, naturally omitted; but, unless he had by that time forgotten that it was not all his own, he should have added an explanatory note in 1817. De Quincey said that Coleridge had "created the dry bones of the German outline into the fulness of life," and, though he is sometimes unjust to Coleridge, here, I believe, he is unjust to "the German outline." Be that as it may (and the ethic of plagiarism is "dry" indeed), Coleridge wrote a magnificent hymn of praise. His pencillings by the way, which he expanded into a letter to Mrs. Wordsworth's sister, Sara Hutchinson, and which she transcribed in her delicate handwriting and left as a κτῆμα ἐς αἰῶν, supply the clue. Only a few sentences have been published.

*"Wednesday Afternoon, half-past three,  
"August 4th, 1802.*

"Wastdale, a mile and a half below the foot of the lake, at an alehouse without a sign, twenty strides from the door, under the shade of a huge sycamore tree, without my coat—but that I will now put on in prudence,—yes! here I am, and have been for something more than an hour, and have enjoyed a good dish of tea (I carried my tea and sugar with me) under this delightful tree. In the house are only an old feeble woman and a Tallyeur lad upon the table; all the rest of the Wastdale world is a-haymaking, rejoicing, and thanking God for this first downright summer day that we have had since the beginning of May.

"On Sunday, August 1st, half-past twelve, I had a shirt, cravat, two pairs of stockings, a little paper and half a dozen pins, a German book (Voss' Poems), and a little tea and sugar, with my night-cap, packed up into my net knapsack; and the knapsack on my back, and the besom

stick in my hand, which for want of a better, and in spite of Mrs. C— and Mary, who both raised their voices against it, especially as I left the besom scattered on the kitchen floor—off I sallied over the bridge, through the hop-field, along into Newlands.”

He passed through Buttermere and so to Ennerdale, where he stayed the night at the house of John Ponsonby, the friend of his landlord, Mr. Jackson.

“On Monday evening the old man went to the head of the lake with me. The mountains at the head of this lake and Wastdale are the monsters of the country,—bare black heads, evermore doing deeds of darkness, weather plots, and storm conspiracies in the clouds. . . .”

On the 4th he reached Wastwater.

“When I first came, the lake was a perfect mirror—and what must have been the glory of the reflections on it! The huge facing of rock, said to be half a mile in perpendicular height, with deep ravines and torrent-worn, except where the pink-striped Screes came in as smooth as silk—all this reflected, turned into pillars, dells, and a whole world of images in the water.”

The next entry is dated Thursday, August 5th.

“I ascended Scafell by the side of a torrent, and climbed and rested, rested and climbed, till I gained the very summit—believed by the shepherds here to be higher than either Helvellyn or Skiddaw. . . . Oh, my God! what enormous mountains there are close by me, and yet below the hill I stand on. . . . Great Gavel, Green Crag, and, behind, the Pillar, then the Steeple. . . . And here I am *lounded*—so fully *lounded* that though the wind is strong and the clouds are hastening hither from the sea, and the whole air seaward has a lurid look, and we shall certainly have thunder,—yet here (but that I am hungered

and provisionless)—*here* I could be warm and wait, methinks, for to-morrow's sun; and on a nice stone table I am now at this moment writing to you, between two and three o'clock as I guess,—surely the first letter ever written from the top of Scafell. But O! what a look down just under my feet! The frightfullest ravine—huge perpendicular precipices, and one sheep upon its only ledge.

Then came the descent into Eskdale, which afforded matter for another tale.

“There is one sort of gambling,” he confesses, “to which I am much addicted. It is this. . . . When I turn to go down a mountain, I wander on, and where it is first possible to descend, there I go, relying on fortune for how far down this possibility will continue. So it was yesterday afternoon. I slipped down and went on for a while with tolerable ease; but now I came (it was midway down) to a smooth, perpendicular rock about seven feet high. This was nothing. I put my hands on the ledge and dropped down, and then another and another, but the stretching of the muscles of my hands and arms, and the jolt of the fall on my feet, put my whole limbs in a *tremble*, and I paused, and looking down, saw that I had little else to encounter but a succession of these little precipices. It was, in truth, a path that in very hard rain is, no doubt, the channel of a splendid waterfall. So I began to suspect that I ought not to go on; but then, unfortunately, though I could with ease drop down a smooth rock seven feet high, I could not climb it, so go on I must, and on I went. I shook all over, Heaven knows! without the least influence of fear; and now I had only two more to drop down, but of these two the first was tremendous. It was twice my own height, and the ledge at the bottom was exceedingly narrow, so if I dropped down upon it I must of necessity have fallen backward, and, of course, killed myself. I lay upon my back to rest myself, and was beginning, according to my custom, to laugh at myself for a madman, when the



sight of the crags above me, and the impetuous clouds just over them posting so luridly and so rapidly northward, overawed me. I lay in a state of almost prophetic trance and delight, and blessed God aloud for the power of reason and will, which remaining, no danger can overpower us."

Whereupon he contrived somehow to slip down one of the so-called chimneys, and to reach Eskdale in safety. That is the prose version, if prose it can be called, of his Hymn to Scafell. The poetry was suggested and started by Friederike Brun's noble Alcaics; the scene is Chamouni, the garment which the mountains wear is Alpine, but the passion which lifts the poet to the height of his great argument,—that was infused by the English "monarch of mountains" into an English poet. And at the last he spake with his tongue :

"Hast thou a charm to stay the morning star  
In his steep course ?

Around thee and above,  
Deep is the sky and black ! transpicuous black,  
An ebon mass ! Methinks thou piercest it  
As with a wedge ! But when I look again  
It is thine own calm home, thy crystal shrine,  
Thy habitation from eternity.

Hand and voice  
Awake ! awake ! and thou, my heart, awake !  
Green fields and icy cliffs all join my hymn,  
And thou, thou silent mountain, lone and bare,  
O blacker than the darkness all the night,  
And visited all night by troops of stars,  
Or when they climb the sky, or when they sink,  
Companion of the morning star at dawn,  
Thyself earth's rosy star, and of the dawn  
Co-herald,—wake, oh wake, and utter praise.

And thou, thou silent mountain, lone and bare,  
When as I lift again my head, bowed low  
In adoration, I again behold,  
And to thy summit upward from the base  
Sweep slowly with dim eyes suffused with tears,—  
Rise, mighty form ! ever as thou seem'st to rise,  
Rise like a cloud of incense from the earth !  
Thou kingly spirit throned among the hills,  
Thou dread ambassador from earth to heaven.  
Great Hierarch ! tell thou the silent stars,  
Tell the blue sky, and tell the rising sun,  
Earth with her thousand voices calls on God ! ”

I have endeavoured to record and to illustrate, rather than to characterise or criticise, Coleridge's work as a Lake Poet. The criticism of great critics is itself a work of art. But when all is said and done, and the expositor has played his part to perfection, and summed up the whole matter in the most brilliant and cogent epigrams, the *poem* is still the thing, which, to be loved, must be known in and for itself, as though there were no critics in the world. Poetry is not loved because it is not read, and it is not read because there are many things in it which are hard to understand. To know what the poet knows, to see what the poet sees, is the secret of being able to feel as the poet felt, and so to partake of his genius. If we have so prepared ourselves we shall listen to what *our* betters say of *their* betters, and we shall be able to judge between the interpreter and the prophet.

One or two questions, however, which demand special treatment spring out of the consideration of Coleridge as a Lake Poet. I can only touch upon these. It has been shown that Coleridge was a more



particular, if not a more profound and more accurate observer of Nature than Wordsworth. He was for ever tabulating and recording the *minutiæ* as well as the sublimities of land and sky, and of the face of the waters; and yet he but seldom fused *them* into pictures or compositions. Wordsworth was less careful *de minimis*, and was observant of the spirit rather than the letter of Nature. But Nature was his immediate teacher—he was her constant and loyal servant. It was not so with Coleridge. With him Nature was a means to an end, the companion and handmaid of the imagination, the informer and inspirer of the “passion, and the life whose fountains are within.” It follows that Wordsworth delivered his message as a poet, and that Coleridge was impelled to go for his message elsewhere, if not further afield. It may have been—I do not think it was—a fruitless quest, but surely it was a noble one. It is often charged upon him that he forsook poetry for metaphysics, as though he had deliberately turned aside from the loftier and the purer to a lower and unworthy aim, or was turned aside in spite of himself. Some say that his muse was lulled to sleep by opium, and others that opium called up the vision and inspired the melody, and afterwards annulled them altogether. He says himself that he sang for “joy,” and, lacking joy, was songless; that poesy, the “shaping spirit of the imagination,” is a function of bliss—not pleasure, not mirth, not even happiness, but of inward satisfaction, of a mind and heart at one. But from whatever visitation of the natural or the spiritual man he turned to “abstruse research,” he did not forget that he was a

poet. It was in the spirit and the power of poetry that he suffered himself to be consumed with a zeal for truth, and I make bold to say that the world is the better and the wiser for his martyrdom. And now and again, I doubt not, he was rewarded with a vision of "The Vision." Now and again, in those long night-watches between moonrise and moonset, when he was wrestling with the mysteries of Being, he might have exclaimed with Sir Galahad :

"Ah, blessed vision ! blood of God !

My spirit beats her mortal bars,

As down dark tides the glory slides,

And star-like mingles with the stars !"

## NOTE.

The following summary of poems, first published by S. T. Coleridge in newspapers and magazines, has been compiled from the notes, foot-notes, etc., attached to the several poems in 'The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,' 1877, vols. i, ii (edited by R. H. Shepherd), and from the notes to 'The Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,' 1893 (edited by James Dykes Campbell), and from numerous memoranda made in the course of personal investigation and research. For a similar enumeration of poems contributed to newspapers, etc., see the 'Bibliography of Coleridge,' by the late Richard Herne Shepherd, revised, corrected, and enlarged by Colonel W. F. Prideaux, C.S.I., 1900.

*Poems first published in the 'Cambridge Intelligencer.'*

Lines written at the King's Arms, Ross	. . .	Sept. 27, 1794
Absence: a Farewell Ode, etc.	. . .	Oct. 11, 1794
Anna and Harland	. . .	Oct. 25, 1794
Genevieve	. . .	Nov. 1, 1794
Lines addressed to a Young Man of Fortune		Dec. 17, 1796
Ode for the Last Day of the Year	. . .	Dec. 31, 1796
Parliamentary Oscillators	. . .	Jan. 6, 1798

*Poems first published in the 'Morning Chronicle.'*

To Fortune	. . .	Nov. 7, 1793
Elegy imitated from Akenside	. . .	Sept. 23, 1794
Epitaph on an Infant	. . .	Sept. 27, 1794

*Sonnets on Eminent Characters.*

To the Hon. Mr. Erskine . . . . .	Dec. 1, 1794
Burke . . . . .	Dec. 9, 1794
Priestley . . . . .	Dec. 11, 1794
La Fayette . . . . .	Dec. 15, 1794
Kosciusko . . . . .	Dec. 16, 1794
Pitt . . . . .	Dec. 23, 1794
To the Rev. W. L. Bowles . . . . .	Dec. 26, 1794
Mrs. Siddons . . . . .	Dec. 29, 1794
To William Godwin . . . . .	Jan. 10, 1795
To Robert Southey . . . . .	Jan. 14, 1795
To R. B. Sheridan . . . . .	Jan. 29, 1795
To Lord Stanhope . . . . .	Jan. 31, 1795
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To a Young Ass . . . . .	Dec. 30, 1794

*Poems first published in the 'Morning Post.'*

To an Unfortunate Woman . . . at the Theatre . . . . .	Dec. 7, 1797
Melancholy: a Fragment . . . . .	Dec. 12, 1797
Fire, Famine, and Slaughter: a War Eclogue . . . . .	Jan. 8, 1798
The Old Man of the Alps . . . . .	March 8, 1798
The Raven . . . . .	March 10, 1798
My Lesbia, let us Love and Live . . . . .	April 11, 1798
Lewti, or the Circassian's Love Chant . . . . .	April 13, 1798
Recantation (France): an Ode . . . . .	April 16, 1798
Moriens Superstiti ("The hour-bell sounds," etc.) . . . . .	May 10, 1798
Recantation illustrated in the Mad Ox . . . . .	July 30, 1798
The British Stripling's War-Song . . . . .	Aug. 24, 1799
The Devil's Thoughts . . . . .	Sept. 6, 1799
Lines written in the Album at Elbingerode . . . . .	Sept. 17, 1799
Lines composed in a Concert Room . . . . .	Sept. 24, 1799
To a Young Lady ("Why need I say") . . . . .	Dec. 9, 1799
Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladié . . . . .	Dec. 21, 1799

Ode to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire	Dec. 24, 1799
A Christmas Carol . . . . .	Dec. 25, 1799
Talleyrand to Lord Granville . . . . .	Jan. 10, 1800
Alcæus to Sappho . . . . .	Nov. 24, 1800
The Two Round Spaces : a Skeltoniad . . . . .	Dec. 21, 1800
On Revisiting the Sea Shore . . . . .	Sept. 15, 1801
Ode to Tranquillity . . . . .	Dec. 4, 1801
The Picture, or the Lover's Resolution . . . . .	Sept. 6, 1802
Hymn before Sunrise . . . . .	Sept. 11, 1802
The Keepsake . . . . .	Sept. 17, 1802
Inscription on a Jutting Stone over a Spring . . . . .	Sept. 24, 1802
Dejection : an Ode . . . . .	Oct. 4, 1802
Answer to a Child's Questions . . . . .	Oct. 16, 1802
France : an Ode (reprinted) . . . . .	Oct. 14, 1802
The Day-dream . . . . .	Oct. 19, 1802

*Epigrams first published in the 'Morning Post.'*

To the Lord Mayor's Nose . . . . .	Jan. 2, 1798
On Deputy ("By many a booby's," etc.) . . . . .	Jan. 2, 1798
To a Well-known Musical Critic . . . . .	Jan. 4, 1798
Names ("I ask'd my fair," etc.) . . . . .	Aug. 27, 1799
On a Reader of His Own Verses . . . . .	Sept. 7, 1799
Jim writes his Verses . . . . .	Sept. 23, 1799
Doris can find no taste in tea . . . . .	Nov. 14, 1799
Jack drinks Fine Wines . . . . .	Nov. 16, 1799
What rise again with all one's bones . . . . .	Dec. 12, 1799
To Mr. Pye . . . . .	Jan. 24, 1800
Song ("Ye Drinkers of Stingo") . . . . .	Sept. 18, 1801
Epitaph on a Bad Man . . . . .	Sept. 22, 1801
Drinking <i>versus</i> Thinking . . . . .	Sept. 25, 1801
The Devil Outwitted . . . . .	Sept. 26, 1801
'The Wills of the Wisp . . . . .	Dec. 1, 1801
To a certain Modern Narcissus . . . . .	Dec. 16, 1801
To a Critic ("Most candid critic") . . . . .	Dec. 16, 1801
Always Audible ("Pass under Jack's window") . . . . .	Dec. 19, 1801

Pondere non numero ("Friends should be weighed")	.	.	.	.	Dec. 26, 1801
To Wed a Fool	.	.	.	.	Dec. 26, 1801
Original Epigrams, Lot I	.	.	.	.	Sept. 23, 1802
What is an epigram ? (1).					
Charles Grave or Merry (2).					
An Evil Spirit's on Thee, Friend ! (3).					
Here Lies the Devil (4).					
To One Who Published, etc. ("Two things," etc.) (5).					
Scarce any Scandal (6).					
How seldom, Friend (7).					
Reply to above.					
Old Harpy (8).					
To a Vain Young Lady (9).					
A Hint to Premiers ("Three Truths," etc.)					Sept. 27, 1802
Westphalian Song ("When this my true love," etc.)	.	.	.	.	Sept. 27, 1802
From me, Aurelia	.	.	.	.	Oct. 2, 1802
For a House-dog's Collar	.	.	.	.	Oct. 2, 1802
In Vain I praise thee, Zoilus	.	.	.	.	Oct. 2, 1802
Epitaph on a Mercenary Miser	.	.	.	.	Oct. 9, 1802
Original Epigrams, Lot II	.	.	.	.	Oct. 11, 1802
A Dialogue between an Author and his Friend (1).					
Μωροσοφία, or Wisdom and Folly (2).					
Each Bond Street Buck (3).					
From an Old German Poet (4).					
On the Curious Circumstance, etc. (5).					
Spots on the Sun (6).					
When Surface Talks, etc. (7).					
On my Candle—the Farewell Epigram (8).					

*Poems first published in 'The Courier.'*

The Exchange	.	.	.	.	April 16, 1804
Farewell to Love	.	.	.	.	Sept. 12, 1806
To Two Sisters	.	.	.	.	Dec. 10, 1807

The Virgin's Cradle Hymn . . .	Aug. 30, 1811
Mutual Passion (altered and modernized from an Old Poet) . . .	Sept. 21, 1811

*Poems first published in 'The Watchman.'*

To a Young Lady with a Poem on the French Revolution . . .	March 1, 1796
Imitation from Casimir ("The solemn- breathing air," etc.) . . .	March 9, 1796
To Mercy . . .	April 2, 1796
The Hour when we shall Meet Again .	March 17, 1796
Recollection ("As the lone savage," etc.)	
Epigrams . . .	April 2, 1796
On a Late Marriage between an Old Maid, etc.	
Epigram on an Amorous Doctor.	
Lines on observing a Blossom on the 1st of February, 1796 . . .	April 11, 1796
To a Primrose ("Thy smiles," etc.) .	April 17, 1796

*Poems first published in 'The Friend.'*

The Three Graves . . .	Sept. 21, 1809
Epigram ("An excellent adage," etc.) .	Oct. 26, 1809
"'Tis True, Idoloclastes Satyrane" .	Nov. 23, 1809

*Poems published in the 'Monthly Magazine.'*

On a Late Connubial Rupture . . .	Sept., 1796
Reflections on entering into Active Life .	Oct., 1796
Sonnets in the Manner of Contemporary Writers . . .	Nov., 1799

*Poems first published in 'Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine.'*

Fancy in Nubibus . . .	Nov., 1819
The Old Man's Sigh: a Sonnet . . .	June, 1832

*Poems first published in 'The Literary Souvenir.'*

Lines suggested by the Last Words of Berengarius	1827
Epitaphium Testamentarium . . . . .	1827
Youth and Age . . . . .	1828
What is Life ? . . . . .	1829

*Poems first published in 'The Bijou.'*

Youth and Age ( <i>et vide supra</i> ) . . . . .	1828
The Two Fountains . . . . .	1828
Work without Hope . . . . .	1828
The Wanderings of Cain . . . . .	1828

*Poems first published in 'The Amulet.'*

The Improvisatore . . . . .	1828
Three Scraps . . . . .	1833
Love's Burial Place (1).	
The Butterfly (2).	
A Thought suggested by a view of Saddleback (3).	

*Poems first published in 'The Keepsake.'*

Epigrams . . . . .	1829
"There comes from Old Avaro's Grave" (1).	
"Swans Sing before they Die" (2).	
The Garden of Boccaccio . . . . .	1829
Song <i>ex improvise</i> , On hearing a Song in Praise of a Lady's Beauty (" 'Tis not the lily brow," etc.) . . . . .	1830
The Poet's Answer, etc. ("Love, Hope, and Patience in Education") . . . . .	1830



*Poems first published in 'Friendship's Offering' (1834).*

My Baptismal Birthday.

Fragments of the Wreck of Memory ; or, Portions of Poems  
composed in Early Manhood :

1. Hymn to the Earth.
2. English Hexameters, written during a Temporary  
Blindness (1799).
3. The Homeric Hexameter Described and Exemplified.
4. The Ovidian Elegiac Metre described and exemplified.

Love's Apparition and Evanishment.

Lightheartednesses in Rhyme by S. T. Coleridge.

1. The Reproof and Reply.
2. In Answer to a Friend's Question.
3. Lines to a Comic Author, on an Abusive Review.

An Expectoration, or Splenetic Extempore on my Joyful  
Departure from the City of Cologne ("As I am a  
rhymers," etc.).

Expectoration the Second ("In Cöln," etc.).



Thesone Walter - Doctor }  
for  
Ernest Hartley Coleridge  
June 3 1903

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S. T. COLERIDGE AS A LAKE POET.

BY

ERNEST HARTLEY COLERIDGE, M.A., HON. F.R.S.L.

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